

Greyhound Special Commission of Inquiry

Factsheet – July 2016

The Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry and the Government’s response



- The Honourable Michael McHugh AC QC was appointed by the NSW Government on 6 May 2015 to inquire into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW following the exposure of wide-spread live baiting practices and animal cruelty.
- Due to the overwhelming amount of evidence presented to the Commission, its timeframe was extended and it reported to Government on 16 June 2016.
- The report recommended two options:
 - Option 1 (Rec. 1) – no longer permit greyhound racing and close down the industry.
 - Option 2 (Rec. 2-80) – maintain the industry and undertake reforms to improve transparency and governance and reduce the level of greyhound deaths.

- The NSW Government has decided to shut down the industry and legislation will be prepared and introduced into Parliament to ban it in NSW.
- The transition to shutdown will be 12 months to allow appropriate management of animal welfare and transitions for industry participants, greyhound racing will be permitted until 1 July 2017.
- An administrator will be appointed to run Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) during the transition to shutdown, after which GRNSW will be dissolved.
- Protection of animal welfare, humane treatment and minimisation of animal deaths will be the NSW Government’s priority through this transition and Government has engaged the RSPCA NSW to assist with this.
- Assistance will be available for those who currently make a living from the industry.
- The Government’s arrangements with wagering operators will also be addressed in this plan.

Some key findings and observations of the Special Commission’s report

- Of the 97,783 greyhounds bred in the last 12 years, between 48,891 and 68,448 dogs were killed because they were deemed uncompetitive as racing dogs – this equates to a “wastage” rate of 50 to 70 per cent.
- Even by reducing the number of races to the minimum required for the industry to remain viable (593), at that wastage rate there would still be 2,000 to 4,000 dogs killed prior to reaching racing age each year.

- Evidence of live baiting extends as far back as 2009 and with around 10 to 20 per cent of trainers engaged in the practice, the Commission concluded that there is endemic support for the practice and that GRNSW knew about the practice and did nothing about it.
- Greyhound racing is only commercially run in eight countries. The largest of those is the United States where it has been in decline over a number of years with Arizona becoming the 40th state to ban the sport in June this year.
- Deaths and injuries went unreported to GRNSW even following a Four Corners report in February 2015 exposing live baiting practices, and the establishment of the Special Commission of Inquiry in May 2016.

Quotes from the Special Commission's report

- 1.125. "The Commission is satisfied, however, that, notwithstanding the efforts of GRNSW led presently by Mr Newson, the problems that the industry creates - particularly the extent of wastage in the greyhound racing industry - cannot be appropriately addressed at the present time. The Commission's view is that, despite the best intention and efforts of the new management at GRNSW, it appears unlikely that the issue of the large scale killing of healthy greyhounds by the industry can be addressed successfully in the future."
- 1.40. "Important sections of this industry have little, if any, interest in the socialisation of greyhounds. Another answer is the culture of the industry. This is an industry whose members have not only condoned but have participated in the mass slaughter of tens of thousands of healthy greyhounds simply because they no longer are, or never were, able to compete against other dogs."
- 1.42. "It is an industry where, as Chapter 17 details, many trainers appear to prefer cheap and sometimes painful methods of treating greyhound injuries instead of using the services of qualified veterinary surgeons."
- 1.55. "Even more disturbing than this evidence of participants condoning or turning a "blind eye" to the practice, was evidence that several high-ranking officials of GRNSW believed that

live baiting was occurring in the industry. In September 2009 and March 2010, senior officials even prepared documents for meetings of the GRNSW Board which plainly indicated that the practice continued, yet senior management took no adequate steps to investigate and stop the practice."

- 1.60. "In Chapter 4 of this Report, the Commission finds that GRNSW engaged in the conduct knowingly and with the intention of sanitising the information that became available to the public concerning injuries suffered by greyhounds. The motive for the policy was the hope that, by doing so, substantial criticism of the greyhound racing industry in NSW could be avoided."
- 3.307. "Given these views, and the highly entrenched nature of live baiting as a traditional training method, there is a very real risk that, once the harsh spotlight of this Commission is removed from the industry, the practice of live baiting will thrive once more. It is imperative that regulators take all available steps to try to ensure that this does not occur. That said, as history suggests, there is reason for pessimism on this front."

On the report's publication

- The Special Commission of Inquiry report has been published in accordance with the recommendations of the Special Commissioner, the Hon Michael McHugh AC QC. The Special Commissioner recommended that parts of the report not be published. Those parts have been redacted in accordance with the Special Commissioner's recommendations

For more information about the report and the government response

Visit the website at www.greyhoundracinginquiry.justice.nsw.gov.au

Or call **1800 812 115** for more information about support services for existing greyhounds and industry participants.